

Appl. No. : 10/647,369
Filed : August 25, 2003

REMARKS

Claims 1-10, 14-19, and 22-27 remain pending in the present application, Claims 11, 20, and 21 having been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and Claims 1, 10, 22, and 26 having been amended. The claims set forth above include marking to show the changes made by way of the present amendment, deletions being in ~~strikeout~~ and additions being underlined.

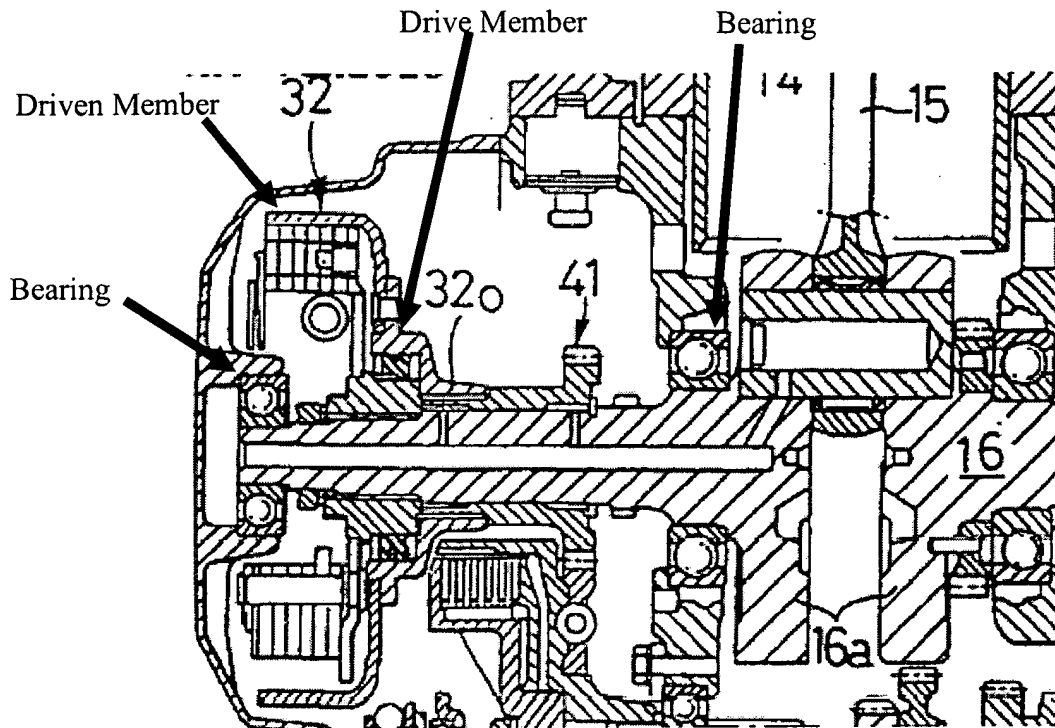
In response to the Office Action mailed December 16, 2005, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to reconsider the above-captioned application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following comments.

Shichinohe et al. Does Not Anticipate Claims 1, 4-7, 10-13, 15, 18-21, 24, and 25

The Examiner rejected Claims 1, 4-7, 10-13, 15, 18-21, 24, and 25 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,515,940 to Shichinohe et al. Applicant respectfully traverses the present rejection. However, in order to expedite prosecution of the present Application, Applicant has canceled Claims 20 and 21 and incorporated that subject matter into Claim 1. Additionally, Applicant has added the subject matter of Claims 11, 20, and 21 into Claim 10. Applicant reserves the right to further prosecute the original versions of Claims 1-27 through continuation practice.

Shichinohe teaches a casing of a power unit capable of “simultaneously driving the **front** and the **rear wheels** of a saddle type vehicle.” Shichinohe, Abstract, lines 1-3; *See Id.* at col. 1, ll. 7-9. Additionally, it was the Examiner’s position that Shichinohe also teaches a drive member 32 coupled to a driven member 32o. In the reproduction of Figure 4 of Shichinohe set forth

below, the drive member 32 and the driven member 32o are both supported directly by the crankshaft 16, the normal approach for rotatably supporting a crankshaft within an engine.



For example, the Summary of the Invention section of the present Application indicates that:

[0006] For example, known assemblies for coupling an input shaft of a transmission to a crankshaft of an engine of, for example, but without limitation, a snowmobile, **rely on a direct, rigid connection between the input shaft and the crankshaft.** As such, loads imparted to the input shaft are directly transferred to the crankshaft of the engine in the form of torsional and bending loads. Thus, in order to increase the strength of the connection between the input shaft and the crankshaft, the input shaft and/or the crankshaft must be made larger. Changing the shape of a crankshaft requires significant design considerations in light of, for example, the number of bearings typically used to support a crankshaft and balancing. Thus, by configuring the crankcase to support the input shaft, the crankcase can absorb some of the loads transmitted from the input shaft, thereby reducing the total load on the crankshaft and avoiding the need to redesign the crankshaft.

Pages 1-2, paragraph no. [0006] of the present Application (emphasis added).

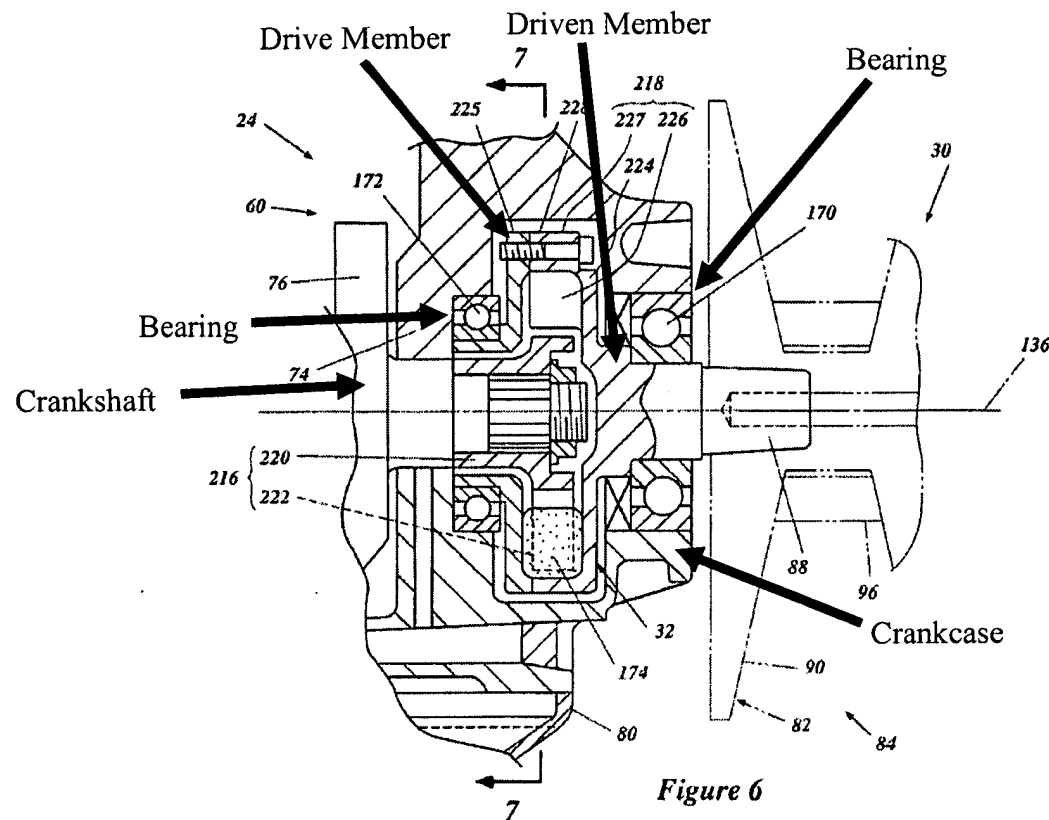
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Thus, the present Application clearly recognizes the drawbacks of a design where both the “drive member” and the “driven member” (as recited in the present claims) are supported by the crankshaft. Further, the present Specification and Claims make a clear distinction between designs where these members are supported by the crankshaft and where they are supported by the crankcase.

For example, Claim 1 now recites, among other recitations, “a coupling system for coupling said engine with said transmission, said coupling system comprising a drive member and a driven member, said drive member being located along said first axis and being coupled with said crankshaft, said driven member being located along said first axis and being coupled with said transmission, said driven member being rotatably supported by said crankcase, and said drive member being coupled with said driven member, wherein the drive member is permanently meshed with the driven member and are configured to always rotate at the same speed.”

Similarly, Claim 10 now recites, among other recitations, “coupling means for coupling said engine with said transmission within said crankcase; wherein said coupling means comprises a driven member rotatably supported by said crankcase and a drive member, wherein the drive member is permanently meshed with the driven member such that the drive member and the driven member always rotate at the same speed.”

An non-limiting embodiment of such arrangements is illustrated in Figure 6 of the present Application, a portion of which has been reproduced below. .



As shown in Figure 6, the “drive member 216” is connected to the crankshaft 76. However, the “driven member 218” is rotatably supported by the crankcase, via the bearings 170. This arrangement provides the further advantage described at paragraph [0076] of the present application, as follows:

[0076] As such, the input shaft 88 is **not supported only by the crankshaft**. Rather, the input shaft 88 is **rotatably supported by the crankcase 74**. Thus, the bending loads applied to the input shaft through the interaction of the drive belt 96 and the drive pulley 90 are not transferred to the crankshaft 76. Rather, such bending loads are imparted to the bearings 170, 172. Additionally, because the drive member 216 is coupled with the driven member 218 within the crankcase 74, the coupling device 32 is protected from the environment in which the snowmobile 20 is operated.

Present Application, page 13, paragraph no. [0076] (emphasis added).

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As noted above, Shichinohe teaches that both the drive member 3232o and the driven member 32 are supported directly and only by the crankshaft 16. Thus, Applicant submits that Claims 1 and 10 clearly define over the Shichinohe reference. Additionally, Applicant submits that Claims 4-7, 12-13, 15, 18-21, 24, and 25 also define over the Shichinohe reference, not only because they depend from one of Claims 1 or 10, but also on their own merit.

The Proposed Combination of Shichinohe/Barthruff Does Not Make Claims 2, 3, 14, and 27 Obvious

Claims 2, 3, 14, and 27 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shichinohe in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,127,279 to Barthruff. Applicant respectfully submits that these claims are allowable over Shichinohe in view of Barthruff.

However, Applicant notes that Claims 2 and 3 depend from Claim 1, and Claim 14 depends from Claim 10. Claims 1 and 10 are both allowable, as explained above. Further, Applicant has, as noted above, incorporated the subject matter of Claims 20 and 21 into both of Claims 1 and 10. Thus, because neither Claims 20 nor 21 are subject to the present rejection, the present rejection is moot. In any event, Applicant submits that Claims 2 and 3 are also allowable, not only because they depend from Claims 1 or 10, but also on their own merit. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw these rejections.

The Proposed Combination of Shichinohe/Shaw Does Not Make Claims 8, 9, 16, and 17 Obvious

Claims 8, 9, 16 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shichinohe in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,095,275 to Shaw. Applicant respectfully submits that these claims are allowable over Shichinohe in view of Shaw.

However, Applicant notes that Claims 8 and 9 depend from Claim 1, and Claims 16 and 17 depend from Claim 10. Claims 1 and 10 are both allowable, as explained above. Further, Applicant has, as noted above, incorporated the subject matter of Claims 20 and 21 into both of Claims 1 and 10. Thus, because neither Claims 20 nor 21 are subject to the present rejection, the present rejection is moot. In any event, Claims 8, 9, 16, and 17 are also allowable, not only because they depend from Claims 1 or 10, but also on their own merit. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw these rejections.

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Claims 22 and 26 Are In Condition For Allowance

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that Claims 22 and 26 would be allowable if amended into independent form. Applicant has amended both Claims 22 and 26 into independent form. Thus, Applicant submits that Claims 22 and 26 are in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons presented above, Applicant respectfully submits that this application, as amended, is in condition for allowance. If there is any further hindrance to allowance of the pending claims, Applicant invites the Examiner to contact the undersigned.

Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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